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ABSTRACT

Although evaluation is a necessary prerequisite to the continued development of university counseling centers, a standardized measure is seldom used as an evaluation tool. The Counseling Services Assessment Blank (CSAB), a questionnaire that solicits a respondent's satisfaction with counseling services received in relationship to the type of problem experienced (personal, vocational, or educational), was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Personal Counseling Service at Texas A&M University. The CSAB was completed by 104 students who had terminated counseling at the center. A majority of respondents categorized their need for counseling as educational; conflict with self and others were the predominate reasons given for seeking help. Results indicated that students were pleased with the counseling services. Women were more receptive than men toward counseling. A high percentage of seniors and freshmen reflected that these years were stressful times for them. (Although school-specific, this research suggests an evaluation procedure which other researchers might find useful in evaluating counseling programs.) (Author/NRB)

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The Client Satisfaction Survey:
An Exploration in Self-Evaluation

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The Client Satisfaction Survey:

An Exploration in Self-Evaluation

Evaluation is a necessary prerequisite to the continued development of any college or university counseling center (Hurst and Morrill, 1971). Often such studies are conducted with the results periodically appearing in the literature. It is infrequent, however, that a standarized measure is employed as an evaluation tool.

Hurst and Weigel (1968) attempted to remedy this situation with the development of the Counseling Services Assessment Blank (CSAB). It is a short, low cost questionnaire, designed to elicit information that can assist counseling centers in determining program effectiveness and facilitating improvement in already existing counseling services (Harman, 1971; Proctor, Spinelli, and Warshaw, 1976). The instrument is unique in that it solicits a respondent's degree of satisfaction with counseling services received in relationship to the type of problem experienced i.e., personal, vocational, or educational (Hurst, Wiegel, Thatcher, and Nyman, 1969). Such information can be most helpful since counseling centers tend to address one of the three counseling areas (i.e., personal, vocational, or educational) more often than the other two (Warman, 1961). By utilizing an instrument such as the CSAB, a particular counseling center can determine how well it is meeting its intended goal.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Personal Counseling Service of Texas A&M University. This counseling service has identified its counseling mission as primarily personal. This unique opportunity is afforded by the existence of a second counseling service, the Academic Counseling Center on the same campus.

Method

Three hundred questionnaires with return postage were mailed to individuals randomly selected from a pool of students who had terminated counseling the previous semester. An initial mailing and one follow-up produced one hundred and four responses. Thus, the total response rate was 32%.

Results

Sixty percent of the respondents were female; forty percent were male. The majority of students were enrolled in the Colleges of Engineering, Liberal Arts, Agriculture, and Business Administration. Most of the students were single (87%) and in the 18-25 year old range. In relationship to class ranking the greatest percentage of students seeking counseling were seniors (34%) and freshman (19%).

The Counseling Services Assessment Blank (CSAB) requests students to rank order on a basis of 1 to 3 (with 1 being most important) their reasons for seeking counseling. Possible responses are: (a) personal; (b) an educational concern; and (c) gaining information about self. Table I contains the responses students gave to this self-diagnostic question.

Insert Table I

One can easily see that a majority of the respondents viewed their need for counseling as educational. Second, was information about self and third was a personal need.

Students were also asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being most important) what they attribute as the cause of their seeking counseling. In addition, using a five point scale (with one being the lowest numberical degree) students were asked to rate the counseling services provided. Table II contains the responses given to this two part question.

Insert Table II Here

Conflict with self and others were the predominate reasons given and respectively ranked first and second. Gaining information about self and the college environment were ranked third and fourth. Seeking information on or developing skills in any area was seldom a reason students came to the Personal Counseling Service and it was ranked fifth most often in this section.

Ratings on a five-point scale (with five being most important) were also sought on a variety of other issues. Results indicated that students found testing to be helpful (3.52); that counseling information was expected to remain very confidential (4.75); that information disclosed to a group was expected to be less confidential (4.00); that counseling experiences, individual (3.96) and group (3.53) were positive; and that counselors were more helpful in individual sessions (3.15). Physical facilities of the Personal Counseling Service were viewed as adequate (3.96); students viewed their willingness to seek counseling as a strength (3.80) and found the overall counseling experience to be positive (3.95).

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the results of this survey. Initially, it should be pointed out that in general students were pleased with the services they received at the Personal Counseling Service. This is easily supported by the fact that no service aspect received a mean rating of less than 3.15.

The ratio of men to women on the campus of Texas A&M University is three to one. The fact that twenty percent more women than men used the services of PCS indicates that women on this campus are more receptive to seeking counseling.

The higher percentage of seniors and freshman utilizing the services clearly reflects that these are stressful times for college students. A notion that is consistent with the literature (Astin, 1977).

Students do not view the Personal Counseling Service as a place to obtain specific skills. Rather, it provides them with an opportunity to explore those more personal and private aspects of life which may not receive as much attention under the programs offered by some other services on campus.

Future evaluations of the Personal Counseling Service should indicate specific improvements or declines in service since a standard measure was employed. Though comparisons across campuses would be pointless, due to the fact that each has its own specific needs, the Counseling Services Assessment Blank will enable the Personal Counseling Service to make specific adjustments in services to meet the changing needs of its student body.

Studies utilizing the CSAB as an evaluation tool have sporadically appeared in the literature. Overall, each has attested to its usefulness in determining the degree of satisfaction students had with counseling services. One can only speculate as to why it hasn't been used more often!

TABLE 1

Respondents Self-Diagnosis For Seeking Counseling Services

CONCERN	RANK			
	1	2	3	NA
Personal	24	20	15	45
Educational	74	16	8	9
Information about self	5	22	29	48

TABLE II

Reason For Seeking Counseling and Satisfaction With Services Obtained

CONCERN	RANK						RATING
	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
Gain Information/Self	9	21	24	18	3	29	3.68
Gain Information/Environment	14	10	24	22	6	28	3.57
Conflict with Self	46	26	11	3	2	15	4.58
Conflict with Others	30	25	7	13	13	16	3.74
Lack of Skill	6	4	11	9	37	37	3.16

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